

In beginning this module I first analyzed my current lesson plans and daily teaching practice using the CCT Performance Profile, specifically the section on Planning for Active Learning. In doing so I learned that much of my instructional planning was based on the content of the CT Preschool Curriculum Framework and the state preschool performance standards as a whole and in my planning process I did not consistently use student performance data to determine individual learning needs to drive my planning. Consequently my instructional plans were generally not differentiated nor did they provide an appropriate level of challenge to meet the needs of all learners within my classroom. Consequently, in discussing this analysis with my mentor, it was decided that in completing this module my goal was to learn to plan using student data to create a series small group instructional plans that are appropriately differentiated to meet individual student needs.

I first began my eliciting the help of our educational manager to review previously collected data, specifically through analysis of the Preschool Child Profile. From this data our educational manager provided each teacher with visual charts of the data for each child as well as the class at large. From meeting and working with her I learned how to comprehend this data. She taught me how to identify strengths and weaknesses of the whole class as well as individual children. We worked to color code the data and it was soon very apparent and I learned how varied the abilities were within the classroom.

From the knowledge I gained from working with our educational manager on analyzing student data I decided to focus specifically on three performance standards, that through analysis of student data, showed a need for improvement by all students within the classroom. I was now going to focus primarily performance standards COG 12: Recognizes similar sounds in speech, COG 14: Uses writing to convey meaning and Displays knowledge of letters. On a scale of 1-8, my student's current abilities measured from 2-7. Student abilities were consistent across the board among the three performance standards.

With the deeper understanding of current student progress I began to explore and then plan strategies for differentiation in my classroom. By better understanding my student's currently level of performance, I now understood the need to combine the needs of my students with the expectations of the curriculum. In working with my mentor and with my better understanding of student data I was able to create three groups within my classroom comprised of six students each for which I would use for my small group literacy instruction. Because in planning for my current small group instruction I have not been targeting individual needs, my daily groups are not planned and are decided on a daily basis informally. Now in planning out each of these three groups, which I have formed based on student data and current level of performance I now anticipate being able plan more effectively by differentiating the instruction provided to each group in order to target the specific needs of the children within each group more effectively.

In the next step towards completing this module I began to work closely with my mentor to brainstorm and plan a set of differentiated lessons. I initially decided to use a small group lesson in which students will create a caterpillar using the letters of their own name which would be previously written on cut out construction paper circles to compose the body and then add a caterpillar head in which they could draw a face on before adding additional caterpillar details such as legs, antenna and a background. This activity will be tied together with a larger caterpillar and butterfly unit, which is highlighted by reading The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle. Each of the three small groups will receive differentiated instruction.

The first small group lesson will target the orange group who are my students with the lowest abilities in each of the three performance standards previously mentioned: recognizing similar sounds in speech, writing abilities and letter identification abilities. With my knowledge of their current abilities, derived from collected student data, I decided with this group my I will focus primarily on letter identification. I will work alongside these children to complete the activity with the goal of identifying and naming the letters in their name.

With the second of my three groups, whose current level of performance measures about right in the middle with scores of 4's and 5's in a continuum of 1-8 I have planned to have this same small group activity target identification and naming of the letters in their name in their name, similar to the first group. I have then planned to have this group also write the first letter in their name and identify the

sound the first letter in their name has. By doing so I will provide a greater level of challenge for the children in this group, targeting all three performance standards, and will more appropriately meet the individualized needs of these learners and greater build upon their already acquired knowledge.

The last group that I have differentiated this small group lesson for is my green group, comprised of students already exhibiting the greatest levels of abilities in each of the three targeted performance standards. In order to provide an adequate challenge I plan to have these children identify and name each of the letters in their name, will identify the sound their name begins as well as ends with, and will then write their whole name below their constructed caterpillar. In my planning of this lesson I will be providing these students with the greatest level of challenge and will target all three performance standards more in depth.

All three of these small group activities for which I have planned were done so based on student data displaying current student performance and level of academic need. I took into account each child as an individual and by doing so I anticipate having greater student progress. After planning and differentiating these lessons this way I understand that if I was to have them all complete the same small group activity without differentiating them, I would not be targeting their individual needs and their level of growth would not address the skills these children already have.

While I had planned out this series of differentiated lessons in completing this module I still wanted to gain a deeper understanding of differentiating lessons at the early childhood level. Consequently I further referenced a variety of articles on the subject. The first I read was titled Differentiation In Action written by Judith Dodge and published by Scholastic Teaching Resources. From this research I learned a great deal about Sensory Approaches to learning and the importance of including all sensorial learning styles within each lesson. Children respond differently and each child may learn best from a certain sensory approach or learning style including auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic. Consequently this article has made me strongly consider planning to accommodate a variety of different learning styles within my lessons. To use this new learning in my practice I then readdressed how I was planning each of the small group lessons and added pieces to each making sure I was including a variety of sensorial learning styles within each. For example in working with the blue group, the second group mentioned previously, I plan to incorporate the use of white boards in which I can demonstrate to each individual child how to form the first letter in their name, a visual component, while saying a letter formation rhyme to address those students who are auditory learners. An example of this would be in forming the letter E, while writing the letter on the white board I would say, "Pull straight down for capital E. Then add shelves 1, 2, 3." Additionally for this group to add a tactile component I have planned to have children use their finger to erase what I have written on white board using correct letter formation and repeating the rhyme before attempting to complete the task using a pencil. Similarly, I have used this new learning in the planning of all three of

my small groups to add components targeting a variety of sensory approaches to each.

A second resource in which I learned a great deal about differentiating and adapting lesson plans to meet individual learners was an article published by PBS titled *Adapting the Curriculum to Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners*. This article specifically targeted early childhood education. There was one strong point made in this article that truly justified all of the learning that has taken place within this module: "While we are all in the same room, we are not all in the same place." This quote truly sums up and validates what I have learned and the changes I have made in completing this module. I now understand the need for differentiation within the classroom and have a better handle on the process needed to properly plan differentiated small group lessons. I have learned about evaluating student data and reports and how to use this information in my plans. Using this information I have been able to develop three differentiated small group lessons that focus on the same content goals but will better address each individual child and build upon their current level of performance.

By applying these methods in my planning and utilizing all I have learned I truly anticipate a greater rate of student growth. Through using plans that are differentiated based on current student performance I believe I will better target each child as an individual. Further, within each of my differentiated small group lessons, by planning using a variety of sensorial approaches to learning I also

foresee being able to better reach and accommodate all learners and their individual learning styles within each small group. At the completion of this module I am now confident in my abilities to analyze student data and then use this information to better create differentiated small group lessons. I look forward to implementing these lessons within my classroom and examining a greater level of student understanding due to all I have learned about and will apply within my classroom in regard to planning differentiated small group lessons.

<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/earlychildhood/articles/adapting.html>

<http://www.gkestner.com/Letterform.htm>

<http://www.mrsjonesroom.com/songs/alphlist.html>

<http://www.mrsjonesroom.com/songs/busrules.html>

Number rhymes;

0; Around you go and around you go

That's the way to make a zero

1; Pull down once, then you're done

That's the way to make a one

2; Around and back on the railroad track,
two, two, two

3; Around the tree, around the tree

That is how you make a three

4; Pull down push across, pull down once more that's the way to

make a four.

5: Across the board, down you dive
Around the pool, that's a five.

6; Grab the spoon and stir the mix.
That is how you make a six.

7; Across the sky and down from heaven
That is how you make a seven.

8; Make an S but do not wait,
close the gate to make an eight.

9; First the head and then the spine,
That is how you make a nine.